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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001997

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: FM MULKI ON HIS MARCH 5-6 VISIT TO ISRAEL AND THE
PA

REF: A. AMMAN 1945

[1](#)B. AMMAN 1924

[1](#)C. AMMAN 1719

[1](#)D. AMMAN 1353

[1](#)E. AMMAN 571

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i. David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Mulki described to Charge a very positive visit to Israel. Israel and Jordan agreed to seek U.S. support for reviving the trilateral economic committee, and Mulki believes he gained PM Sharon's support for a deal on the release of Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails. Israeli Ambassador Handelsman told us that Israeli officials informed Mulki they neither welcomed nor accepted the idea of deploying the Badr Brigade (Palestinian security elements recruited in Jordan in the mid-90s) in Palestinian territories, effectively killing that initiative. They did welcome a Jordanian role in training new recruits, however. End Summary

[1](#)2. (C) Jordanian Foreign Minister Hani Al-Mulki provided Charge March 8 with a readout of his March 5-6 visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority (ref a). He called the trip overall &very positive.8

[1](#)3. (C) Prisoners: Mulki claimed that in a "one-on-one" meeting with PM Sharon (and Dov Weisglas), the Israeli PM undertook to seek cabinet agreement to &try to find a way8 to release as early as March 14 some of the Jordanians jailed for crimes committed before the two countries, peace treaty of 1994. (Separately, Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Yaakov Handelsman, who had participated in most of Mulki's other meetings in Israel, told Charge there was such a one-on-one and conceded prisoners may have been discussed. However, Handelsman was skeptical that prisoners could be freed quickly, even if the cabinet agreed, as the Israeli victims, families would be entitled to a court hearing.)

[1](#)4. (C) Mulki added that &my plan,8 after the prisoners are released, is for the King to then travel to Israel in March. Mulki asked us not to speak about this idea (we suspect because the King is not aware of it.)

[1](#)5. (C) Trilateral economic committee: Mulki said FM Shalom had &enthusiastically8 agreed to seek the revival of the old U.S.-Jordan-Israel committee on economic development, which last met in the mid-90,s. Handelsman confirmed this; he did not yet have a readout from Shalom,s recent meetings in Washington, but expected the FM to have raised it. Mulki said Israeli trade minister Olmert was enthusiastic, too. If Washington supports this idea, post proposes a re-inaugural meeting in Jordan on the margins of the May 20-22 World Economic Forum, when we could take advantage of a strong private sector business presence.

[1](#)6. (C) Israeli investment in Jordan: In Israel Mulki plugged for more investment in Jordan. Handelsman commented to Charge that many potential Israeli investors are deterred because Jordanian lawyers will not represent them in legal efforts to protect their assets. This is a direct result of the Jordanian professional associations, anti-normalization campaign, in which lawyers who might represent Israeli clients are intimidated and threatened with loss of their licenses (refs c through e). The recent GOJ campaign to rein in the associations (ref b) may eventually solve Israeli investors, problems, but leaves the GOJ open to charges that it is back-sliding on civil liberties.

[1](#)7. (C) Red Sea-Dead Sea project: Local press reported that Mulki pressed for a revival of Jordanian-Israeli efforts to seek financing for this mega-project. These efforts had been on hold for several years because of Palestinian objections. Handelsman told Charge that Israel and Jordan will now seek a World Bank agreement to carry out a feasibility study without active Palestinian Authority participation; the Palestinian Authority would be identified as "beneficiaries8 but not &participants8 in the project.

[1](#)8. (C) Badr Brigade: According to Handelsman, Mulki was told by senior Israeli officials that they did not welcome

the deployment of the Badr Brigade, a group of Palestinian security elements recruited from among refugees and ex-PLA elements in Jordan in the mid-90s, but never deployed in the Palestinian territories. Regardless of Jordanian vetting, the Israelis did not believe the Jordanian GID would be able to exercise sufficient control over them, once deployed, to overcome Israeli misgivings about their loyalty and competence. However, the Israelis welcomed a Jordanian role in training newly recruited Palestinian forces, whether in Jordan or Jericho.

HALE